

# Response to UNHCHR - Questionnaire on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Older Persons

## Establishment of the Division of Ageing

1. **Name of Practice:**

Establishment of the Division of Ageing

2. **Area Concerned:**

- Social protection
- Adequate standard of living
- Care

3. **Type of Practice:**

- Institution
- Policy/Action Plan on Ageing

4. **Level of Implementation:**

- National

5. **Description of practice:**

The Division of Ageing was established under the former Ministry of Social Development in August 2003, in accordance with the tenets of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), which was endorsed by the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the UN Second World Assembly on Ageing held in Madrid, Spain in 2002. The Division serves as an umbrella agency to focus ageing initiatives, and acts as an advocate for older persons in Trinidad and Tobago.

To educate and sensitize key stakeholders and the general public on the ageing issues; and to enhance the quality of life of older persons throughout Trinidad and Tobago by providing an enabling environment for their continued development.

Functions of the Division of Ageing:

- Develop standards of care for older persons
- Monitor and coordinate the implementation of the National Policy on Ageing
- Organize and coordinate training programmes, seminars and workshops for care providers of older persons
- Develop and implement programmes and projects for the benefit of the older persons
- Conduct research on matters pertaining to ageing and older persons
- Conduct public sensitization programmes nationwide on issues regarding ageing and older persons

- Network with social-sector Ministries, the private sector, and civil society in the interest of older persons
- Control, monitor and regulate Homes for Older Persons Types I & II

The Division is currently formulating a National Plan of Action on Ageing.

- Commemorating International Day of Older Persons on October 1 annually with cultural and sporting/recreational events for seniors
- Establishing Senior Activity Centres in Trinidad where older persons can come together for educational and recreational activities that enhance their dignity
- Commemorating World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15 annually
- Hosting annual Retirement Planning Seminars for Public Officers
- Hosting annual Public Open Forum for Older Persons
- Providing research data on ageing to stakeholders
- Operating the Older Persons Information Centre (OPIC) which serves as a Help Desk

In 2002, data from the Central Statistical Office in Trinidad and Tobago revealed that 10% of the population was over the age of 60 years. The significance of this finding was that Trinidad and Tobago was a part of that select group of countries within the developing world having an “ageing population,” which is representative of the demographic trend within the region. At present, the elderly population of Trinidad and Tobago stands at 12 percent or 156,000 persons over the age of 60 years (Central Statistical Office, 2010).

#### **6. Actors involved in the implementation of practice:**

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services’ Division of Ageing

#### **7. Rights of older persons the practice promotes and protects:**

The practice promotes social protection, adequate standard of living and housing.

#### **8. How the practice promotes or protects such rights:**

The practice promotes such rights through controlling, monitoring and regulating policies implemented by the practice.

#### **9. What groups of older persons, if any, benefit from the practice:**

All groups of older persons benefit from the practice because it does not focus on any particular group.

#### **10. Assessment and Monitoring of practice:**

The *Homes for Older Persons Act No. 20 of 2007* was earmarked in the National Budget 2011 for proclamation, which is dependent on the establishment of an Inspectorate in the Division of Ageing, to provide oversight for the operations of Residential Homes for Older Persons. Further, this legislation will

regulate and monitor all Homes (categorized as Types I and II) and care facilities for older persons in Trinidad and Tobago.

The need to formalize a monitoring and evaluation system for the social sector in Trinidad and Tobago led to the establishment of the Monitoring and Evaluation Division in the Ministry of Social Development in April 2003.

Monitoring and Evaluation activities are undertaken to achieve any of the following purposes:

- i. to be used as a tool to help planners initiate new projects, programmes or policies;
- ii. to determine whether existing interventions should be strengthened or discarded;
- iii. to facilitate continuous improvement in service provision;
- iv. to assess the overall effectiveness and efficiency of social interventions in terms of their outputs, outcomes, costs and impacts; and where necessary, to determine the catalytic effects and sustainability of such projects and programmes.

#### **11. Proposed improvements:**

The establishment of policies to formalize the functions of the Division of Ageing as well as the Monitoring and Evaluation Division will maintain a goal-oriented approach in implementation of initiatives.

#### **12. How could this practice be a model for other countries:**

The Division of Ageing is designated as a policy implementation unit and its main goal is to coordinate the implementation of the National Policy on Ageing, which was developed by a Multi-disciplinary Committee and approved by Cabinet in 2006. This would be a great practice for other countries to model as this practice creates an environment which would facilitate the meaningful participation and involvement of older persons in society.

The Policy was launched in July 2007 and addresses (12) priority areas of action that are consistent with those identified in MIPAA. These priority areas for action are as follows:

1. Social Security
2. Income Security and Employment
3. Participation, Involvement and Social Inclusion
4. Dignity and Respect for the Elderly
5. Healthcare and Standards for hospitals and care facilities
6. Housing
7. Education and Training
8. Recreation
9. Legislation
10. Transportation
11. Disaster Preparedness
12. Research

## **Social Welfare Grants**

### **1. Name of Practice:**

Social Welfare Grants

### **2. Area Concerned:**

- Adequate standard of living
- Social Protection

### **3. Type of Practice:**

- Legal
- Policy

### **4. Level of Implementation:**

- National

### **5. Description of practice:**

The major grants administered by the Social Welfare Division are governed by *the Public Assistance Act Chap. 32:03* and *Senior Citizens' Pension Act Chap. 32:02*.

The role and functions of the Social Welfare Division in this regard are as follows:

- To provide income support to persons over 65 who satisfy other criteria of income and residence.
- To provide financial assistance to the infirm and needy.
- To enhance the quality of life of recipients and other necessitous persons.

### **6. Actors involved in the implementation of practice:**

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago

### **7. Rights of older persons the practice promotes and protects:**

The aim of the practice is to provide assistance to relieve the immediate need of persons in crisis situations.

### **8. How the practice promotes or protects such rights:**

Social Welfare Grants in these categories promote Independent Living, Social Participation, and Elimination of discrimination.

### **9. What groups of older persons, if any, benefit from the practice:**

All persons over 65 who satisfy specific criteria of income and residence and older persons who are considered infirm and needy benefit from the practice.

**10. Assessment and Monitoring of practice:**

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) is the core social sector Ministry with responsibility for coordinating the implementation of Government's social and human development objectives. The MSDFS is mandated with responsibility for addressing the social challenges of poverty, social inequality and social exclusion. Particular emphasis is placed on developing and executing programmes and services that protect and assist vulnerable and marginalized groups in society such as the elderly.

The MSDFS is responsible for developing, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating social sector policies and programmes to ensure sustainability, cultural relevance and economic viability.

**11. Proposed improvements:**

One of the main challenges facing Trinidad and Tobago in relation to promoting and protecting the rights of older persons is the difficulty in providing the elderly with information. The ability to receive and access information is critical in the promotion of and protection of human rights. As such, information spread across electronic media such as the internet or social media eludes many senior citizens as many older persons not very familiar with new technologies. Therefore, the Government has to find alternative and innovative ways to reach out to older persons such as providing information at health centres or other public spaces where older persons may frequent.

Another challenge is the fact that the ageing population is a growing one, and there are limited resources within the economy. The Government has to ensure to allocate adequate financial resources for senior citizens such as social welfare grants while taking into consideration that the ageing population may be growing at odds with the working population.

In addition, one needs to consider particular needs such as gender specific needs. There is a significantly larger female population of older persons than the male population. This means that resources may need to be allocated to deal with gender specific issues.

**12. How could this practice be a model for other countries:**

Other countries should consider implementing legislative reform similar to that of *the Public Assistance Act Chap. 32:03* and *Senior Citizens' Pension Act Chap. 32:02* in order for a Social Welfare Division to administer social welfare grants to address the issues of social protection and an adequate standard of living amongst the older persons of their nation.

**Prepared by:**  
**The International Law and Human Rights Unit**  
**Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs**